

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE **1**LOS ANGELES TIMES
14 March 1986

4 U.S. Envoys CIA Contacts, Nicaragua Says

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MANAGUA, Nicaragua—The Nicaraguan chief of state security Thursday accused four current and former U.S. Embassy officers of serving as CIA contacts for two lieutenants in the Interior Ministry charged with spying for the United States.

At an Interior Ministry press conference, one of the accused lieutenants, Reynaldo Tadeo Aguado Montealegre, told reporters that he was lured to Miami with false reports that his mother had cancer. He charged that he was blackmailed into working for the CIA when U.S. authorities briefly detained his mother and made vague threats against his family.

Security Reports

Nicaraguan authorities announced last Friday that they had detained Aguado, Lt. Jose Eduardo Trejos Silva, and Trejos's wife, Rosalina Sosa, on espionage charges. Trejos and Sosa were not presented to reporters.

Cmdr. Lenin Cerna, the Sandinista security chief, said the CIA recruited the lieutenants to report on the Sandinista government's internal security, on military operations against U.S.-backed rebels of the Nicaraguan Democratic Force and on the Sandinistas' relations with guerrillas in El Salvador and Colombia.

To illustrate the charges, Cerna produced an array of spy tools allegedly provided to the lieutenants by the CIA, including cigarette-lighter cameras, an ashtray with a hidden compartment in its wicker floorstand, invisible-ink carbon paper, pads to decode secret messages and cellophane scrolls of instructions.

Cerna identified the four Americans as Bradley Cecil Johnson, second in command of the embassy's economic section from Feb. 10, 1984 to Dec. 20, 1985; Benjamin B. Wickham, a first secretary of the embassy from Oct. 16, 1983, to Aug. 20, 1985; Stephen D. Murchison, currently a first secretary of the embassy, and Bonnie Sue Bennet,

Wickham's name appears in a 1974 State Department biographical register with a notation that he was an officer in the Foreign Service reserve in the U.S. Embassy in Tehran from 1971 to 1974. Reserve status, which is not normally carried by regular diplomats, has often been given to CIA officers assigned to U.S. embassies.

U.S. Embassy spokesman John Roney declined to comment on the charges but confirmed that Johnson and Wickham had worked at the embassy and that Murchison and Bennet still are posted here.

"As a policy, we do not comment on intelligence matters or alleged intelligence activities," Roney said.

In Washington, CIA and State Department spokesmen also refused to comment. State Department spokesman Gregory Lagana did add a charge of his own.

"An increasingly broad sector of the Nicaraguan population is being accused of treason these days . . . reflecting the mounting insecurity of the Sandinistas as their domestic popularity declines," Lagana said, reading a statement. "We do not believe it is a coincidence that this charge comes at a time when our Congress is considering legislation dealing with Nicaragua."

Cerna said that the four American officials provided tools, supplies and instructions and made "personal contacts" with the lieutenants. He said that Johnson had been the main contact person for Trejos and that Wickham had recruited Aguado in Miami.

A source close to the case said that U.S. Ambassador Harold E. Bergold Jr. was called to the Foreign Ministry before the press conference to receive a formal protest from the Sandinista government.

The Sandinistas have made no move to expel Murchison and Bennet, the two accused embassy officials who are still in Nicaragua, Roney said.

Past Expulsions

The last time the Sandinistas accused U.S. officials based here of undercover activity was in June, 1983, when they charged three embassy employees with plotting to poison Foreign Minister Miguel D'Escoto's liquor. The three U.S. officials were expelled from the country, and the State Department responded by closing six Nicaraguan consulates in the United States and expelling 21 consular officers.

The current case is the first involving alleged CIA penetration of the secretive Interior Ministry,

which oversees state security.

Trejos allegedly was recruited in November, 1983. His wife was called "an accomplice" who listened to coded radio messages from the CIA. Aguado was said to have been recruited in November, 1985.

At the press conference, Aguado, looking pale and walking with a limp, gave a detailed account of alleged CIA blackmail and intrigue but did not stay to answer reporters' questions. Officials said that Aguado had the limp before he was detained.

Aguado, 25, said he received a call in May, 1985, from his brother saying that his mother had been diagnosed as having cancer and that she had less than a month to live. He said he asked for authorization to go to the United States, but his departure for Miami was delayed by the proclamation of a U.S. economic blockade.

Family Accusation

The delay caused his family to accuse him of indifference towards his mother, he said, although they admitted she would live longer than one month. He said he finally visited his mother in October.

She introduced him to a man who called himself William Perez, Aguado said. Perez told him that "it is completely false" that his mother had cancer.

Aguado quoted Perez as saying that he worked for the U.S. government and that not only U.S. officials but also members of the Nicaraguan Democratic Force would like to talk to Aguado.

The latter said he received threatening calls from Nicaraguans and that two days later, his mother disappeared. The following morn-

ing, he said, he received a telephone call from Perez saying that his mother was safe, would be home in 45 minutes and that Perez wanted to meet with him.

He said that he met Perez at a Miami-area Holiday Inn where Perez showed him "a black badge," identifying him as a State Department official. He said that Perez told him he worked for the CIA.

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